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SUBJECT: (C) President Ortega Asks Former Amb. to U.S. to Consider a Second Washington Tour

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert J. Callahan, Ambassador, Department of State,
Exec; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Arturo Cruz Jr., Nicaragua's most recent Ambassador to the United States, recently confided to the Ambassador that President Daniel Ortega had asked Cruz to consider a second tour in Washington as Ambassador. Cruz says he told Ortega he would consider returning only if two conditions were met. First, Roberto Rivas, the corrupt president of Nicaragua's discredited Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) had to be replaced. Second, Ortega must guarantee transparent Presidential elections in 2011, including credible domestic and international observation.

¶2. (C) Cruz expressed some reluctance to accept the post a second time. He acknowledged that Nicaragua's image had suffered severe damage in the year since he left Washington, and that as Ambassador defending (or at least explaining) Ortega's increasingly undemocratic behavior would be substantially more difficult the second time around.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) We find it interesting that after a year of inaction, Ortega has approached Cruz to reprise his performance in Washington. Ortega's two previous nominees, Saul Arana, Nicaragua's Ambassador to Japan, and Harold Rivas, Nicaragua's Ambassador to Costa Rica, had serious problems. Arana's name was withdrawn after he was asked to provide information about his legal status in the United States during the 1970s. Rivas's nomination was withdrawn after less than 24 hours for unknown reasons.
CALLAHAN